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Chair: Ms. Fiodorow (Vice-Chair) ..... (Poland)
Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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In the absence of Mr. Taalas (Finland), Ms. Fiodorow (Poland), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 134: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 (*continued*)

Enterprise resource planning project
(A/68/7/Add.7, A/68/151, A/68/344 and A/68/344/Add.1 and A/68/375 and A/68/375/Add.1)

1. **Mr. Takasu** (Under-Secretary-General for Management), introducing the Secretary-General's fifth progress report on the enterprise resource planning project (A/68/375 and A/68/375/Add.1), said that Umoja had made significant progress, with deployment of Umoja Foundation in July 2013 in the pilot locations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL), and in November 2013 in cluster 1: all peacekeeping operations, the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe, and the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi. Umoja was now a fully operational live system, covering 3,000 staff globally.

2. As the centrepiece of the Secretary-General's management reforms, Umoja was a top priority for the Committee and the Secretariat, which was harmonizing administrative processes and standardizing integrated service delivery, with a view to improved oversight, leaner administration, and additional efficiencies. Full implementation of Umoja was essential to making the United Nations a more efficient and unified Organization.

3. Implementation of the pilot in July had enabled a successful go-live in peacekeeping missions in November. Valuable lessons had been learned in migrating business readiness activities from disparate operating models to a common operating model, particularly with regard to data reconciliation and data cleansing: data preparedness procedures would be adjusted in future implementations.

4. Deployment in cluster 2, special political missions, would take place in March 2014, as would deployment of Umoja Extension 1 in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The Secretariat was determined to take the necessary steps to ensure the achievement of project milestones.

5. Although the reinforcement by the Secretary-General of process ownership and the prioritization of activities related to Umoja had considerably strengthened governance, organizational readiness remained the major challenge to implementation. Moving from disparate ways of working to a common operating model for the global Secretariat must be carefully planned and managed for each entity, and required significant commitment by stakeholders.

6. Successful implementation of Umoja would realize immediate qualitative and subsequent quantitative benefits: for peacekeeping operations, in the 2016/17 budget cycle; and for the regular budget, from 2017 onwards. The Secretary-General was committed to delivering quantitative benefits in the range of $140 to $220 million by 2019.

7. Overall requirements for Umoja were now projected to be $360.9 million, an increase of $12.8 million compared to the projection of $348.1 million provided in the fourth annual progress report, owing to higher requirements for contractual services and readiness activities for deployment. However, the Secretary-General was not seeking funding for the additional amount and would seek to contain costs through 2014. Updated requirements for 2015, as well as projected resource requirements for 2016 and 2017, would be presented in the sixth annual progress report.

8. The fifth progress report outlined plans to reprofile the Umoja project team to meet needs in the implementation stage, from internal rather than external resources, in particular the challenging tasks relating to implementation at Headquarters and offices in clusters 3 and 4. The proposed upgrade of the post of Deputy Project Director from the D-1 to the D-2 level would strengthen the day-to-day management of the project and allow the Project Director to focus on engagement with senior management to drive organizational readiness.

9. Implementation of an enterprise resource planning system was a demanding undertaking, particularly at the United Nations, where mandates, activities and business models were diverse and geographically dispersed all over the world. With the Committee's continued support and guidance, Umoja would be successfully implemented Secretariat-wide.

10. **Mr. O'Farrell** (Chair of the Audit Operations Committee of the Board of Auditors), introducing the second annual progress report of the Board of Auditors on the implementation of the United Nations enterprise resource planning system (A/68/151), said that Umoja was the most important of a number of business transformations within the Organization, one which, notwithstanding delays and cost escalations, provided an essential opportunity to modernize its business administration.

11. In response to the Board's recommendations, the Administration had taken action to place the project on a sounder footing by appointing an experienced Project Director, increasing engagement with key stakeholders, and strengthening project governance. However, the project team was overstretched, so that the level of support provided to the pilot in UNIFIL would be unsustainable once the first phase of full implementation had started across peacekeeping missions and then the wider United Nations.

12. While project management had improved, more needed to be done to face coming challenges. For example, while the project team had formalized its reporting of risks to the steering committee, risks were still not effectively managed, acted upon quickly enough, or costed to support more effective consideration of their likely impact and decision-making on their handling.

13. The design as now two thirds complete, and the system half built but not yet fully deployed. There was still no integrated plan linking spend to deliverables, making it difficult to judge what progress should have been achieved for the investment to date. The Board could not provide assurances that the project would successfully deliver its full functionality within the existing forecasts of time and cost, or deliver the level of qualitative and quantitative improvements to service delivery that would represent an optimal return on investment.

14. Regarding procurement of services, the lack of an overarching commercial strategy at the inception of the Umoja project had led to difficulties in securing optimal value for money from vendors. The Administration had now stated that it had submitted to the steering committee a plan to develop a commercial strategy for the remaining procurements.

15. In terms of Umoja as a wider business transformation, the appointment of process owners to own and drive new and consistent ways of working was a positive development, the challenge now being to ensure they had the authority to drive change across business areas, and for there to be a mechanism to enable negotiation between process owners and other senior managers so as to realize the expected benefits. The Administration needed to develop benefits realization plans detailing not just the type of benefits, but exactly how and when those benefits would be realized, either through streamlined processes requiring fewer staff, or improved management enabling better decision-making.

16. Given the vested interests of stakeholders, and the complexity of existing organizational, managerial and governance structures, it was challenging to define a clear future United Nations service delivery model. Yet it was important to have some sense of the future target operating model of the United Nations that the enterprise resource planning project and other transformation initiatives were going to support, so as to secure stakeholder buy-in, avoid expensive retrofitting, and enhance accountability for delivery.

17. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/68/7/Add.7), said that, in the light of the difficulties encountered by the Umoja project since its inception, the Advisory Committee considered the initial deployment of Umoja Foundation at the pilot sites and in the peacekeeping missions in cluster I to be a key milestone in the life cycle of the project, one which should provide Member States with some assurance as to the effectiveness of the project leadership and the viability of the system.

18. The Advisory Committee noted from the reports of both the Secretary-General and the Board of Auditors that significant challenges and risks to the project remained. There was a need for rigorous project planning and management, close monitoring and mitigation of risks, and prompt resolution of issues in order to avoid further delay and cost escalation. The Advisory Committee also emphasized the important roles and responsibilities of the project owner and of the steering committee in guiding and overseeing management of implementation of the project, by fostering cooperation on the part of the relevant Secretariat offices and by facilitating decision-making.

19. The Advisory Committee emphasized the importance of setting benefits realization targets with a view to achieving the full potential of the enterprise resource planning system, as well as of developing credible benefits realization plans fully understood by implementing departments and offices. The Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to ensure that the heads of implementing departments and offices were fully engaged and that the project enjoyed high levels of cooperation throughout the Secretariat. The Advisory Committee also stressed the need for the project owner and the process owners, who had committed to realizing qualitative and quantitative benefits for the Organization, to be granted the requisite level of authority to implement the changes to business processes and methods of working embedded in Umoja.

20. The Advisory Committee expected concrete information on the quantitative and qualitative benefits resulting from the implementation of Umoja to be provided in upcoming budget proposals as well as in the performance reports for peacekeeping operations no later than in the 2016/17 period.

21. The Advisory Committee also recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to ensure that the enterprise resource planning system provided Member States with comprehensive, high-quality, accurate and timely information to facilitate their decision-making on administrative and budgetary proposals.

22. Regarding implementation of the project, the Advisory Committee reiterated that the full scope and functionality of the Umoja Foundation, Extension I and Extension 2 phases must be delivered in order to protect the investment already made and realize the expected benefits. The Advisory Committee cautioned against any approach that would result in any descoping of the project, in particular of Umoja Extension 2, which comprised some of the key functions to be automated, including planning and programming, supply chain management and budget formulation.

23. The Advisory Committee also reiterated its previous recommendation that the project team should be maintained until completion of the full deployment, Secretariat-wide, of Extension 2. The authority and leadership of the governance and management structures of the project would be required to deliver the planned results, and dismantling the project team prematurely presented risks that Umoja Extension 2 might not be implemented effectively. However, maintenance of the Umoja project team pending full deployment of Extension 2 did not mean there was no need to make adjustments to the size and composition of the team, or to contain costs and provide most of the required expertise in-house.

24. In that regard, the Advisory Committee welcomed the steps taken to strengthen in-house skills in the enterprise resource planning software, and encouraged further development of such skills. The Advisory Committee also welcomed the increased coordination and cooperation between the Umoja project and the Office of Information and Communications Technology, as well as with the Information and Communications Technology Division of the Department of Field Support, and encouraged further such collaboration.

25. The Advisory Committee also welcomed the pragmatic approach taken by the Secretary-General in addressing the question of indirect costs and in establishing the roles and responsibilities of implementing departments and offices as well as the modalities for the funding of preparatory activities. The Advisory Committee reiterated its previous recommendation that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to report on the level and nature of the indirect costs of preparatory activities borne by implementing offices.

26. Lastly, there was a need to intensify collaboration between the Secretariat and other United Nations entities using the same enterprise resource planning solution. The higher level of harmonization of business processes across the United Nations system resulting from the adoption of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and the implementation of standard, non-customized, enterprise resource planning systems provided further opportunities for more cost-efficient enterprise resource planning implementation, support and upgrade.

27. **The Chair** drew attention to the Joint Inspection Unit's review of enterprise resource planning systems in United Nations organizations (A/68/344) and to the comments thereon of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board (A/68/344/Add.1).

28. **Mr. Daunivalu** (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group had always been supportive of management reforms aimed at increasing the efficiency and capacity of the Secretariat to deliver better results for the Organization.

29. Umoja had been authorized by the General Assembly to replace the Organization's multiple incompatible information and communications technology systems that were costly to maintain and had not kept pace with technological advancements, with a view to simplifying administrative practices and providing accurate data to enable quicker decision-making and better service delivery. While the Group welcomed the implementation of Umoja Foundation, and noted the action taken to strengthen governance, significant challenges and risks remained: organizational readiness, handling of procurement, possible delays in implementation of the project, building the necessary in-house expertise, and adequacy of information and communications technology structures and resources in the Organization. Lessons must be learned from the roll-out of Umoja Foundation in peacekeeping missions.

30. A detailed benefits realization plan, indicating the potential impact of more efficient and effective administration, was important in understanding the implications of the new system. It was also important for Member States to receive comprehensive, high-quality, accurate and timely information to facilitate decision-making on administrative and budgetary proposals.

31. The Group was concerned by the considerable weaknesses noted by the Board of Auditors in the initial phases of the project, which had led to the ineffective and inefficient use of resources. Management failures had caused delays in implementation and contributed to cost overruns.

32. Strong leadership was key to successful delivery of such a complex Organization-wide business transformation. The Group shared the Advisory Committee's concern regarding the risks inherent in dismantling the project team prematurely.

33. **Mr. Presutti** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the member States of the European Union, as strong supporters of Umoja and its potential for business transformation within the United Nations system, welcomed the implementation of Umoja Foundation at the pilot sites and in peacekeeping missions.

34. Significant challenges and risks remained and must be addressed if Umoja was to deliver its full scope and functionality and yield the intended benefits on time and within cost. The Secretary-General should closely monitor the design and deployment of the different phases and ensure strict compliance with the implementation timetable while staying within cost: the increase in projected costs was worrisome.

35. There must also be proper project governance and oversight and risk management. Senior management should be fully committed to supporting Umoja and process owners should be granted the necessary level of authority to implement changes. Collaboration between the Secretariat and other United Nations entities using the same enterprise resource planning solution should be intensified.

36. An integrated project plan detailing what work remained to be done and the cost implications was a fundamental tool for managing project performance. The Secretariat should step up its efforts to complete such a plan and a detailed timetable. Umoja could only succeed if fully implemented, thereby protecting the investment already made and fully realizing the expected benefits.

37. **Ms. Schweizer** (Switzerland), speaking also on behalf of Liechtenstein, said that the two delegations reiterated their support for the Umoja project, one of the flagship elements in modernizing the management of the United Nations. The project would span several years; the experience acquired in the initial deployment of the highly complex enterprise resource planning system must be carefully analysed so as to draw useful lessons for subsequent phases and allow solutions to be developed in anticipation of problems.

38. The transition to Umoja would have a significant impact on the day-to-day management of peacekeeping operations, whose essential mandates must not be negatively affected. The risks to operational effectiveness and of encountering resistance to the new tools must be taken seriously.

39. The risk of schedule and budget overruns, and of a lack of acceptance of the project, remained. It was disconcerting that there was no contingency plan and no clarity regarding what should have been achieved with 55 per cent of the financial resources of the project already spent. A detailed project plan and methodology that would facilitate the establishment of clear links between the budget utilized and defined project stages must be developed quickly.

40. Lastly, the two delegations would be interested to learn how the previous experience of enterprise resource planning systems, the need for system-wide interoperability of such systems, and cooperation with other United Nations entities using Umoja had been taken into account.

41. **Mr. Ono** (Japan) welcomed the progress made in launching Umoja in UNIFIL and UNSCOL and their supporting offices at Headquarters and later in 14 peacekeeping missions and the Regional Service Centre, and looked forward to receiving information on the status of preparatory activities for its implementation in special political missions in 2014. The full scope of the Umoja project must be delivered, and, with strict management of the timetable and cost of the project, each phase should be completed in accordance with the proposed timeline.

42. For the success of a business transformation project of such magnitude, strong leadership and organizational readiness across the entire Secretariat were imperative. Close attention should be paid to coordinating organizational readiness activities related to implementation of Umoja at each location so as to ensure smooth deployment, limit the burden on end-users and avoid disrupting operational activities. The Secretariat should reflect savings from the implementation of Umoja in the budget as soon as possible.

43. Projected overall requirements by 2015 had increased by approximately $12.8 million since the previous Secretary-General's report, mainly owing to the increased cost of contractual services and furniture and equipment. A detailed, integrated plan was needed to determine what work remained and how much it would cost to complete. Such a tool would eliminate the risk of incremental increases in overall costs. Specifically, details of the timeline and total costs incurred in the completion of the design of Umoja Foundation and Extensions 1 and 2, as well as an assessment of the impact of the delays in the finalization of the Umoja design on the overall project timeline and budget, should be included in the next report of the Secretary-General.

44. **Mr. Safronov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation regretted the late issuance of the Advisory Committee's report, which had not been available in Russian at the time of its introduction. Not only was that a violation of standard procedures, it deprived Member States of the opportunity to actively participate in debate on an important question.

45. With regard to implementation of Umoja, he noted the increased effectiveness of the project management bodies, a factor which bolstered the confidence of Member States in its successful completion. The design phase had been finalized and pilot implementation undertaken in UNIFIL and UNSCOL. Nevertheless, the risks previously noted by the Committee were still there, and the impending simultaneous implementation of Umoja in three clusters put at risk timely implementation in each cluster.

46. He noted with regret the growth in the budget for Umoja, now projected at $360 million through December 2015, compared with an initial estimate of $248.3 million. The Secretariat must contain costs and avoid further increases. As yet unresolved was the question of associated costs and how they would be accounted for in the budget for 2014-2015.

47. A specific plan was needed to ensure that the expected benefits of the project were realized. Full deployment of Umoja would increase the capacity of the Organization to implement its mandates with fewer resources. Changes in the structure of the Organization, particularly with regard to operational mechanisms and decision-making, must take place only with the agreement of Member States.

48. **Mr. Tommo Monthe** (Cameroon) commended the Under-Secretary-General for Management on having reconstituted the project team and overhauled governance of the project, thereby bringing Umoja back on track after a period of disarray.

49. A firm timetable for the project must be established and scrupulously respected. If the project continued to be managed without clear objectives and indicators of progress, costs would spiral, trying the patience of Member States, which must see tangible

results by 2015 in order to be able to authorize funding.

50. In addition, given the pace of technological advancement, any slippage in the timetable was likely to render Umoja obsolete: the software was being introduced before the potential of its predecessor, the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), had been fully explored, or the tools it provided utilized. If, then, the timetable slipped, and there was a lengthy delay between conception and implementation, better technologies would become available, obliging the Secretary-General to recommend that Umoja should be dropped and replaced by more up-to-date programs.

51. It should also be understood that moving to Umoja meant migrating from one system to another, raising the difficult question of what should be moved across, and what left behind. That was all the more true in that Umoja had not originally been written for the United Nations, and had had to be adapted to the Organization's needs. The teams responsible for that adaptation must consult those possessing institutional knowledge of the United Nations to ensure that they understood how the Organization functioned and that the software was fit for purpose. It had been necessary, for example, when introducing Umoja in peacekeeping operations, to include new functionalities, not originally present. It must be understood that the United Nations was a complex, global entity, unlike any other. Failure to employ the very latest technology, adapted to reflect the sui generis needs of the Organization, would mean increased costs and the likelihood of premature obsolescence, necessitating the early replacement of Umoja.

Strengthening the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (A/68/7/Add.8 and A/68/506)

Revised estimates: International Trade Centre (A/68/6 (Sect. 13)/Add.1 and A/68/7/Add.6)

52. **Ms. Casar** (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (A/68/506), said that the additional requirements to enable the Office to implement its expanded mandates were estimated at $5,133,800 gross, or $4,758,700 net of staff assessment, for the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015: an amount of $4,036,100 under section 11, United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development, subprogramme 1, Coordination of global advocacy of and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development; an amount of $722,600 under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, comprising $318,000 in respect of recurrent activities and $404,600 in respect of non-recurrent activities; and an amount of $375,100 under section 36, Staff assessment.

53. The Secretary-General proposed the establishment of 10 new posts, comprising six Programme Officers at the P-5, P-4 and P-3 levels; two Economic Affairs Officers at the P-3 and P-2 levels; one Communications Officer at the P-4 level; and one General Service Senior Staff Assistant.

54. In addition, the Office required resources in the amount of $338,000 for organizing consultative meetings relating to the United Nations monitoring mechanism mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/293, as well as resources in the amount of $293,600 for travel to reinforce its capacity in advocacy and communications outreach.

55. Introducing revised estimates under section 13, International Trade Centre (ITC) (A/68/6 (Sect. 13)/Add.1), she said that the Centre was responsible for the implementation of subprogramme 6, Operational aspects of trade promotion and export development, of programme 10, Trade and development, of the strategic framework for the period 2014-2015. The Centre was a joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization (WTO) mandated to provide technical assistance to facilitate the integration of developing countries and economies in transition, in particular least developed countries, into the multilateral trading system through export promotion and international business development. The United Nations and the World Trade Organization equally shared the funding of the Centre's regular budget.

56. The proposed overall level of resources for ITC for the biennium 2014-2015 amounted to SwF 73,209,300, before recosting. The proposed United Nations share of that amount was $38,982,600, before recosting, reflecting a decrease of $1,159,200, or 2.9 per cent, compared to the revised appropriation for the biennium 2012-2013, which amounted to $40,141,800.

57. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's

report on the strengthening of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (A/68/7/Add.8), said that the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to identify and reallocate resources within the regular budget of the United Nations to enable the Office of the Special Adviser to fulfil its mandate regarding the mechanism for monitoring commitments made to Africa's development needs. The Advisory Committee regretted that no action had been taken to reallocate resources for that purpose during the 2012-2013 biennium.

58. The Advisory Committee had no objection to the new posts proposed by the Secretary-General, with the exception of one post of Senior Staff Assistant, whose functions could be performed within the existing staffing capacity of the Office of the Special Adviser.

59. Every effort should be made to contain the costs of the proposed consultation meetings with various stakeholders, including holding them at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa. In addition, the Advisory Committee recommended a 5-per-cent reduction in the requirements for travel of staff in line with its recommendation for all other budget sections in 2014-2015.

60. Lastly, new performance measures should have been included in the Secretary-General's proposals to reflect the additional tasks to be performed in connection with the monitoring mechanism.

61. With regard to the Advisory Committee's report on the proposed programme budget for 2014-2015 for the International Trade Centre (A/68/7/Add.6), the Advisory Committee commended the efficiency measures which had enabled a reduction in the staffing requirements of the Centre by two administrative posts at the General Service level. The Advisory Committee recommended that the P-5 post proposed for transfer from extrabudgetary funding to regular budget funding should be subject to the recruitment rules and regulations applicable to new posts, given that it had not been previously approved under the regular budget. Furthermore, regarding the two temporary positions now being discontinued, any temporary assistance required to undertake their functions should be funded from the regular budget and be reported accordingly in the budget performance report.

62. The Advisory Committee noted the cost reduction measures applied to travel of staff and expected their impact to be reflected in future budgetary estimates. The Advisory Committee recommended a 5-per-cent reduction in the requirements for travel of staff in line with its recommendation for all other budget sections in 2014-2015.

63. Regarding requirements for furniture and equipment, the Advisory Committee welcomed the proposed cost-saving measure to extend the replacement cycle for ITC computers from 4 to 4.5 years, and recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to apply the same measure to the entire regular budget for the biennium 2014-2015.

64. Lastly, the current administrative arrangements under which the Advisory Committee reviewed the ITC budget twice in the year preceding the financial period could be simplified so as to require only one review.

65. **Mr. Daunivalu** (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that since its inception in May 2003, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa had supported the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in their deliberations on Africa; coordinated the Interdepartmental/Inter-agency Task Force on Africa to ensure a coherent and integrated approach with regard to United Nations support for Africa; and coordinated global advocacy in support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

66. Over the ten years since the establishment of the Office, Africa had undergone significant social, political and economic changes, including sustained high economic growth, strengthened democracy and a significant reduction in the number of conflicts. Yet a number of challenges remained. High economic growth rates had not translated into shared prosperity: Africa had not experienced meaningful employment creation, or seen a substantial reduction in poverty.

67. Mindful of the need for a strengthened approach to support Africa, the General Assembly had adopted its resolution 66/293, establishing a monitoring mechanism to review commitments made towards Africa's development needs, with a mandate vested in the Office. The Group strongly supported the proposal to strengthen the Office: given its very limited resources, the Office could not implement the new, additional mandate within its existing resources.

68. The International Trade Centre's mandated activities of fostering sustainable economic development and contributing to achieving the

Millennium Development Goals in developing countries and countries with economies in transition through trade and international business development had proven very effective. The Centre should be provided with the resources needed to discharge its mandates uninterrupted. The Group would closely analyse the Secretary-General's proposed reductions in resources for the biennium 2014-2015, and also seek an explanation of the high vacancy rate. The Group encouraged the ITC management to reduce the gender and nationality imbalance at the senior management level and improve representation from the developing world.

69. **Mr. Coffi** (Côte d'Ivoire), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the Group attached the highest importance to the role of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in mobilizing and coordinating support for Africa's development, as well as in fostering peace and security.

70. By its resolution 57/300, the General Assembly had endorsed the creation of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa with the role of coordinating global advocacy in support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. A number of consultative processes had also been undertaken geared towards transforming the previous agenda for Africa into the New Partnership.

71. Since the establishment of the Office, the continent had undergone a significant transformation, with major social, political and economic changes, a transformation strengthened through a new African narrative and rebranding mandate, the African Renaissance. The Group expected the United Nations to continue to support the African Renaissance, aimed at reinforcing the development of Africa, one of the Organization's eight priorities. The current rapid transformation of Africa presented new opportunities and challenges that would require the Office of the Special Adviser to expand, strengthen its activities and broaden its engagement in order to better respond to the needs of the continent.

72. The Office had suffered from a lack of senior leadership in recent years; the Group welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals on post and non-post resources to strengthen the Office in the areas of policy analysis, monitoring and research, intergovernmental support, advocacy and inter-agency coordination, as well as the proposed establishment of an additional 10 new posts. The strengthening of the Office should be commensurate with the mandates entrusted to it: all posts requested and approved must be filled as a matter of priority, in full compliance with geographical and gender balance.

73. The Group commended the Office on its support to African countries in such important areas as climate change and sustainable development, including the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda. No meaningful progress had been made in transfer of technology in recent years, and the Group called on the Office to continue working in that area in order to have Africa's development partners meet their commitments.

74. **Mr. Tommo Monthe** (Cameroon), recalling that Africa was one of the Organization's priorities, as well as the support for Africa on the part of the Secretary-General and, not least, the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee, said that since its establishment there had been lows and highs for the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, ranging from the proposal to merge it with the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries, to the dynamic relaunching of the Office after the General Assembly had rejected that proposal and the subsequent revitalization of its activities.

75. With the structural adjustments that had taken place in African countries since the 1980s and the launching of new strategic orientations in providing assistance to Africa, there was a need for a strong focal point on African questions, which fell within the purview of several bodies and principal organs, to monitor on an ongoing basis the commitments made. Accordingly, he welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals, in accordance with the wishes of the Assembly, to strengthen the Office, and the Advisory Committee's positive recommendations in that regard. The Fifth Committee should support the proposals for additional resources, endorsed by both the Group of 77 and China and the African Group, so as to endow the Office with a robust administrative and programme framework, with the proviso that there must also be commensurate accountability in the form of demonstrated tangible results.

Agenda item 148: Financing of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (A/68/519 and A/68/620)

Agenda item 159: Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East

(a) United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (A/68/505 and A/68/617)

76. **Ms. Casar** (Controller), introducing the revised budget for the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 (A/68/519), said that the revised 2013/14 budget amounted to $339.3 million, representing an increase of $48.7 million, or 16.7 per cent, over the amount of $290.6 million appropriated by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/270 for the maintenance of the mission. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2104 (2013), the revised 2013/14 budget provided for the deployment of a force protection unit of 1,126 troops for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and reflected an increase in assets and in construction expenses in line with the deployment of additional personnel to four self-sufficient locations.

77. Introducing the revised budget for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 (A/68/505), she said that the revised budget amounted to $60.8 million, representing an increase of $12.8 million, or 26.6 per cent, over the amount of $48 million appropriated by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/278 for the maintenance of the Force. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2108 (2013), the revised 2013/14 budget provided for the deployment of an additional 203 military contingent personnel and their equipment, as well as the related proposed establishment of 10 international temporary positions.

78. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the proposed revised budget for the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 (A/68/620), said that the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of $10,202,200 under vacancy rates for new international staff posts and military observers and contingents, and under construction.

79. The Advisory Committee recommended a vacancy rate of 30 per cent for new international staff posts, as for continuing international staff posts. It also recommended that the proposed revised budget should be adjusted to reflect expenditure for military observers and contingents for the first half of the 2013/14 period based on actual average vacancy rates. Finally, on construction, the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of $5,901,300 in the increase requested for construction services owing to performance over the current period and the magnitude of the increase requested. Any additional resources required should be reflected in the performance report for the mission.

80. Introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the proposed revised budget for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 (A/68/617), he said that while the Advisory Committee had no objection to the resources proposed by the Secretary-General for the deployment of additional military contingent personnel and the enhancement of the security and safety of the Force, some of the proposed requirements could have been partially offset by the underexpenditure under the appropriation for national staff owing to the higher-than-budgeted vacancy rate. The Advisory Committee therefore recommended that the Secretary-General should be requested to adjust the budgetary resources for national staff on the basis of a vacancy rate of 9 per cent in the period 2013/14.

81. **Mr. Coffi** (Côte d'Ivoire), speaking on behalf of the African Group, reaffirmed the Group's commitment to the peacekeeping undertaken by the United Nations and by the African Union. The Group noted with extreme concern a new wave of attacks against United Nations peacekeepers, resulting in loss of life. He paid tribute to the uniformed and civilian men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of humanity.

82. The Group would carefully examine the revised estimates for UNISFA in the amount of $339.3 million and for UNDOF in the amount of $60.8 million, as well as the Advisory Committee's observations and recommendations, with a view to ensuring that the missions were allocated the resources needed to fulfil their mandates.

83. **Mr. Hassen** (Ethiopia) said that since its deployment UNISFA had helped the safe return of

inhabitants, ensured the protection of civilians, and supported the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in establishing a safe, demilitarized zone, the creation of which had been agreed to by the Sudan and South Sudan in March 2013. The agreement covered the modalities for the establishment of a safe demilitarized border zone and an implementation plan for the operationalization of the Mechanism, with the establishment of a headquarters, sector headquarters, and team sites along the border.

84. In that regard, the need for sector headquarters to operate in a self-sufficient manner, and the inherent difficulty of sharing support equipment given the distances involved, made it imperative to acquire vehicles and a helicopter. In addition, the deployment of military and civilian personnel to the sector headquarters sites and team sites necessitated an increase in requirements for construction services, including site preparation work and camp construction. Accordingly, his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's revised resources proposal in the amount of $339,310,800 to implement the additional mandates given by the Security Council.

85. With regard to the deployment of forces, as of October 2013, 117 troops of the authorized contingent of 1,126 were on the ground, with the remainder already scheduled for deployment. His delegation thus noted with concern the Advisory Committee's recommendation for a reduction of $10,202,200 by cutting construction projects and increasing vacancy rates. The cuts recommended compromised mandate delivery, were harmful, and failed to take into account the complex and challenging environment faced by the Force. Given that the sites were located in a remote, inhospitable and undeveloped region, any reduction in the budget would negatively affect the safety and security of the personnel.

86. **Ms. Salih** (Sudan) said that her delegation regretted the late issuance of the documentation on the question before the Committee, in particular the report of the Advisory Committee, negatively affecting the ability of delegations to take the required decisions. Also with regard to documentation, data relating to the Sudan in certain reports on human resources management were inaccurate.

87. She welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 2126 (2013) extending the mandate of UNISFA until 31 May 2014, allowing it to continue its invaluable function of maintaining peace and security in the area. She commended the efforts made by the international community in seeking a definitive solution to the question of Abyei and the implementation of the agreements between the Sudan and South Sudan. In that regard, she acknowledged the sacrifices made by United Nations peacekeepers.

88. Her delegation supported the revised budget for UNISFA for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014, providing for expenditure on contingents, infrastructure and transportation in connection with the establishment of new civilian posts in support of the deployment of military personnel, and the construction of sector headquarters and team sites.

89. Noting the provisions of General Assembly resolution 67/270, she said that factors on the ground meant that the Mechanism sector headquarters must operate self-sufficiently in terms of day-to-day logistical and administrative support. Given the lack of infrastructure in the area, the mission must be provided with adequate resources to discharge its mandate effectively and ensure the safety of its personnel. Accordingly, her delegation rejected the reductions proposed by the Advisory Committee. Lastly, she was concerned at the high vacancy rate and the delays in construction work.

90. **Mr. Ayzouki** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the presence of UNDOF was necessitated by the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan since 1967 and the refusal of Israel to implement the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, which called on it to withdraw its forces to the line of 4 June 1967. Accordingly, his delegation reiterated its view that the cost of funding UNDOF should be borne by the Israeli aggressor.

91. The security situation on the Syrian side of the area of disengagement was deteriorating owing to the activities of armed terrorists groups, which were attacking facilities and infrastructure throughout the Syrian Arab Republic, including facilities and infrastructure that belonged to UNDOF. Israeli forces in the occupied Syrian Golan were participating in those attacks against UNDOF by providing logistical and military support, in violation of the Agreement on Disengagement of forces and international law. Such Israeli support also threatened the safety of mission personnel. On 6 March and again on 7 May 2013, terrorists acting under direct orders from the Qatari

authorities had abducted peacekeepers and taken them across the area of separation into Jordanian territory.

92. Since the establishment of UNDOF, his Government had fully respected the Agreement on Disengagement of forces on the assumption that it was a temporary situation pending an end to the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). His delegation looked forward to the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region through the implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions and the withdrawal by Israeli forces to the line of 4 June 1967. In that regard, he acknowledged the cooperation between the Force and the relevant authorities in Syria.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.